2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

PLATE XLVI

342
417

1.

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2.

[p. 216] [captions on P. 219, bottom]

2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 This custom should be compared with the proverb which I have heard in different parts of Western Ireland: "Only a man stronger than God can [539] build back (westward) of his house" *(Is treise ná Dia an fear a chuireann siar le na theach").* Additions made at the fireplace end of the house are always used as bedrooms. Therefore it will be very difficult to decide whether the bedroom behind the fireplace has originated as an addition to a gable-chimney house or as a partition of a central chimney house. When the wall behind the fire-place does not reach the roof the house must be regarded as a central-chimney house. Now and then it is also possible to discover in another way whether the bedroom belongs to the original house, or is built as an addition to a gable-chimney house.

In both house types the partition walls at the lower end of the house very often were made by very thin wooden partitions, *síleála.* As already mentioned, furniture especially the dresser may be used instead of a partition wall, fig. 1.

In Eastern and Southern Ireland you will find the fireplace cut off to a certain degree from the living room and forming a special kitchen corner by stone-built breasts or piers at both or at one side of the fire-place. This side wall of the fire-place can also be built of wood, fig. 6, and can go a good way into the room, so that the kitchen corner will be more like a closed room.

342 171 Such houses with fireplace partition apparently have their parallels in Welsh houses. The Irish house, then, closely resembles to the living room of the Welsh long-house. This type of Irish house can be called "house with fireplace partition".

Another way of arranging accommodation in the house is to build lofts, *lochta,* and rooms on an upper floor. This upper floor will be arranged at both ends of the living room or kitchen. Then the arrangement with the house divided into three sections and with lofts at both ends is very similar to a house type in southern Sweden, the socalled Sydgötiska huset.[4] which has the kitchen or "stugan" in the centre of the house without any loft and at both ends additional chambers with lofts. Another likeness between the Irish and South Swedish houses is that there are bedplaces in the same way in the additional rooms.

[417] In the Irish house the loft can be reached by a ladder from the kitchen.

The construction of the different elements of the house.

342 Lacking nearly every architectural consciousness and at the same time every kind of imported building-material, the Irish peasant house never

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

ally one comes across very wide ditches of this type with a double hedge and paths or even cart-tracks in between, for example in Co. Limerick. In Rathlin Island the only hedge material that seems to escape the ravages of goats is the balsam poplar. Another plant of New World origin, born in Scotland of South American parents, is the Fuchsia, which runs riot along the coasts. Basket willows and wild "black sallies" for creels are sometimes grown—the latter has the advantage that it is not cropped by cattle.

The scarcity of good oak timber in a country once famed for its oaks—notice the frequency of the element "derry" in townland names—goes far to explain the prevalence of iron field-gates, which are hung on stout pillars of built stone. The newcomer to Ireland cannot fail to be struck by the massive gateposts along the roadsides and about the farm premises. In many districts they are whitewashed annually, and since they often assume proportions out of all relation to their function they are unnaturally conspicuous in a landscape bare of heavy timber. In parts of Ulster, for instance, they are such a characteristic feature of the countryside that it is difficult to imagine it without their cheering twinned greeting. Yet most of them must have been erected within the last century or so: writers of Irish travels before that time frequently comment on the absence of gates, for which in fact there was very limited need so long as the rundale system of farming persisted (Chapter 6). In the small village-communities of the west where the old scheme still prevails the gaps in the fences that surround the open field are closed with jagged root-stumps dragged from the bogs, or with a few thorn bushes. Sampson, writing of Co. Derry in 1814, states that gates were almost unknown except near towns, and that a common substitute was a hay-rope strung with thorns—an interesting rustic forerunner of the hated barbed wire.

Gate pillars and stiles

Fig. 11.

It might appear from the association of built piers with landlords' residences in Donegal that settlers introduced them to Ireland, but I am far from convinced that this is the

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

351
417
explanation. It is true that they occur in Anglesea and in parts of the Scottish lowlands, but in both cases they are likely to be due to Irish influence. It seems to me more probable that an indigenous custom was taken up and diffused by improving landlords. I like to think of the Irish rath defended and glorified by two white stone pillars at the entrance, though I confess that this finds no support in reports of archæological excavations. The only dated piers I know bear the date 1839, but there is an eight-foot pair in Inishowen which, tradition says, had already lost their gates in 1709. The variety of styles and the superstitious beliefs connected with the pillars do strongly suggest that their origin is to be sought far back.

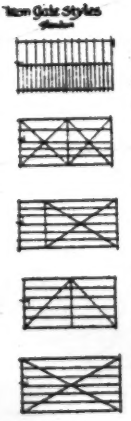

Fig. 12.

I imagine they were used, before the general adoption of fences, to shut off the farmyard from the surrounding open field. Mr. T. G. F. Paterson tells me that in Co. Armagh the gateposts are sometimes referred to as " husband and wife." The most popular shape is cylindrical (Fig. 11), and the average dimensions about three feet in diameter and six feet high. Pretentious specimens may be as high as ten feet. The top is generally finished in a low cone but varies considerably from one district to another: in some parts they are flat-topped " so that the fairies can dance on them." In Co. Meath the usual shape is semi-circular and may have originated in the common practice of building the pillars against a wall at the entrance to the farmyard. In some counties they are square, with a pyramidical roof or a coping of large stones.

[326]

The gates, whether of iron or wood fitted with iron straps, are generally hung in an old-fashioned way: they pivot in a stone socket or " spud-stone," while the top of the heel turns in a perforated stone, nowadays replaced by an iron eye. The gates are not seldom made by the smith, who fashions them out of worn wheel hoops, for instance; and this helps to explain the pleasing absence of standardisation. Fastenings, too, are of many different kinds. Only in a few wooded areas are home-made wooden gates popular: they are light

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

constructions of pegged branches, interwoven it may be with willow or hazel and turning in hoops of wire or cord on a wooden post. But as often as not, even where there are built gate-pillars, the gap is closed with an old cart or a few thorn bushes. The Irishman does not take the same pride as the English farmer in having a well-hung gate. It would appear that more importance is attached to the gateposts than to the gate!

351
417

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

the south, local smiths vied with each other in producing elaborately-made toasters, or "harnen stands," which are of many different styles and deserve study before they all find their way to the scrap-heap (Fig. 33). When grates became fashionable, toasting "fenders" were hung on the bars. The large flat oatcake is cut into four quarters or "farls."

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[415]

[417]

Fig. 34.

Fig. 35.

Nowadays the oatcakes have been superseded by wheaten bread of various kinds: the flour is often mixed with a bit of maize or barley flour and the baking is done either on the griddle (Fig. 34), in a deep "fry pan," or in the pot-oven or "bastible" (Fig. 34). Meat roasted in the pot-oven can be delicious and I have a taste for rice puddings done in this way. Others may tell of the virtues of the "bap" and of potato "slim bread," and it is not for me to repeat the strictures of Young and Cobbett on the strong tea which they said would ruin the peasantry. It should be added that the thin-bread tradition has been developed by the town bakeries into a bewildering variety of breads and scones.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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241 [423] [417] sometimes raises cases of trespass. The fences are the usual dry stone walls of the west, and the fields seldom have gates.

The crops most grown are barley, oats, potatoes, and a little rye, and a few turnips. The manures are sea-weed and farm-yard manure, and occasionally old thatch, saturated with peat smoke, and well rotted with age. The agricultural implements employed are the spade and shovel, and the sickle; the use of plough or harrow is not known. Low-lying, damp places are utilized for the growth of osiers for panniers, baskets, and lobster-pots.

As is the case in many fishing communities, the fields are not well kept, and have a rather untended appearance, the weeds being let grow rankly in the potato fields, the reason given for which is that without the shelter given by the weeds the crop would be speedily destroyed by the winds; but the most probable explanation is that the amount of attention directed towards the fishing at the most critical periods of the year causes the less important occupation to be to some extent neglected. [231] A family keeps a couple of pigs, some sheep, a cow or two, geese (of which large flocks are kept on the islands), ducks and fowl, but no turkeys.

735 Some sixty families are said to be in very poor circumstances, and of these forty-six have no cattle.

231 The animals are to a large extent supported on the very extensive commonage.

The pigs, cattle, and fowl are taken into the houses at night, while the sheep, geese, and ponies get shelter how they can. The pigs are not regularly fed, but have, as the people express it, "the run of their teeth" of the island, and by feeding on such provision as they can pick up on the sea-shore, the flesh is often rendered rank and fishy-flavoured.

372 Fuel is supplied either by peat cut from the bogs, or, in a large proportion of cases, by "scraws" of the thin peaty layer which covers the rocky surface of the higher and wilder parts of the islands, cut into blocks the size of peats, and dried in the sun. The substance thus obtained can be burned, and will throw out considerable heat, but is extremely dirty and wasteful, as it contains a large proportion of earth and small pebbles, which are left in the ash. From repeated cuttings of these "scraws" the surface of the higher ground has become much deteriorated in value, and this is especially the case on Inishshark, [237] where there are no bogs. In times of scarcity fish-bones and cow-mats (*bois de vâche*) are used as fuel.

373 For light, petroleum lamps and candles are now generally used,

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

178 and the horse-plough, and old hedges are being grubbed up to
311 give the machine elbow-room. This in turn leads to a demand for larger farms, for the small holdings which are characteristic of Ireland (one half of the farms are between fifteen and fifty acres) have customarily just so many fields as will give a proper balance between pasture and plough, and where two or three tiny fields are knocked into one the balance is upset. In the same way earlier technological advances, though on a smaller scale, have changed the cultural landscape at different periods. Demographic crises have had similar effects. Before the Great Famine, for example, 80 per cent of all Irish farms were under fifteen acres.

From the earliest times, it seems, Ireland was a land of small holdings and small field-plots. Yet the actual pattern of small hedged fields as we know it today is of no great antiquity. For the most part it is a consequence of the agrarian revolution which affected the country, at various dates in different parts, between about 1750 and 1850. It was the planting of thorn hedgerows and the building of stone walls that fixed what had previously been ill-defined and temporary field boundaries, associated with the openfield or rundale system of land use. With permanent enclosure went the consolidation of holdings into compact independent blocks, though in some districts independence was achieved without grouping the fields together so that properties consist of scattered hedged fields which reflect the disposition of plots under the earlier openfield system. The hedge in fact has had a hard struggle for survival in the poorer districts. Both the thorns and the gates which enclosure brought with it were frequently hacked down for
● [417] firewood, and to this day a wooden gate is a rarity in the countryside: the field gates are almost invariably of iron. There are many districts where the thorn hedge itself is almost unknown, where low earthen mounds half overgrown with bramble and whin (gorse) give us a glimpse of a stage between permanent enclosures and the openfields which they replaced. In Donegal gangs of villagers threw down the landlords' fences as quickly as they were erected,[1] and in some parts of the county they are still kept in repair for the summer months only.

[1]Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 41.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

where the land has been almost the sole available resource go far to explain the jealousy with which established rights are maintained, but there are deeper needs and bonds in the rural community.

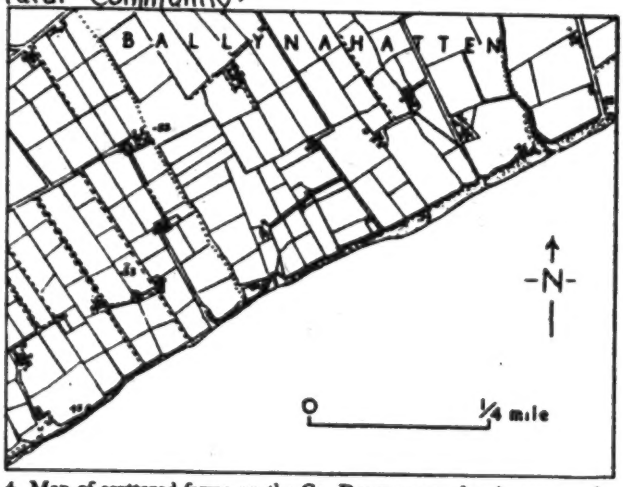

FIG. 4. Map of scattered farms on the Co. Down coast, showing seaweed-roads. (Based upon the Ordnance map with the sanction of the Controller, H.M.S.O.)

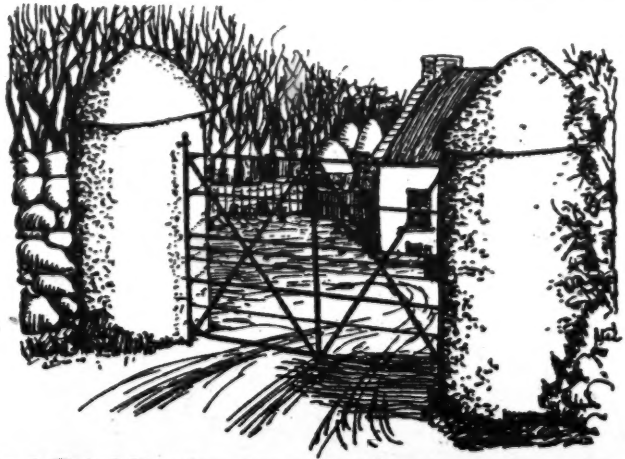

FIG. 5. 'Defended by a heavy iron gate hung between stout stone gate-pillars:' an Ulster farm.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

to keep an eye on his wealth. The muck-heap is the source of good crops and good luck, a potent symbol of well-being: 'where there is muck there is luck'. It was the custom, recorded for instance in the Glens of Antrim, to stick a sprig of rowan tree upright in the midden on May Eve to protect the farm from mischievous fairies. The muck symbolizes the fertility of the farm.

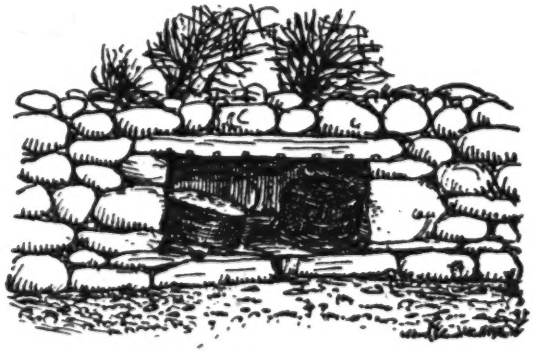

FIG. 32. Keeping-hole for pots, Co. Down.

In many parts of the country, especially in the northern counties and in Co. Wexford, the entrance to the farmyard is dignified by a pair of massive stone gate piers, generally built-up from field-stones in the form of a conical topped cylinder and kept whitewashed. There are many modern variants in concrete, and the old style piers are steadily disappearing and are often hastened to their end by carelessly driven tractors or lorries. They seem far too massive for the gates they carry, resembling twin bastions defending the entrance to a fortified enclosure (Figs. 5, 33). In some areas, probably under the influence of improving landlords or land agents, field entrances are also dignified by built-up stone piers, and it is possible to explain the fashion as part of the agrarian revolution which resulted in enclosure. In the virtual absence of well-grown oak trees they provided an Irish alternative to the oak gate-post of the English farm, sturdy enough to carry the iron gate which for the same reason took the place of the five-barred oaken gate.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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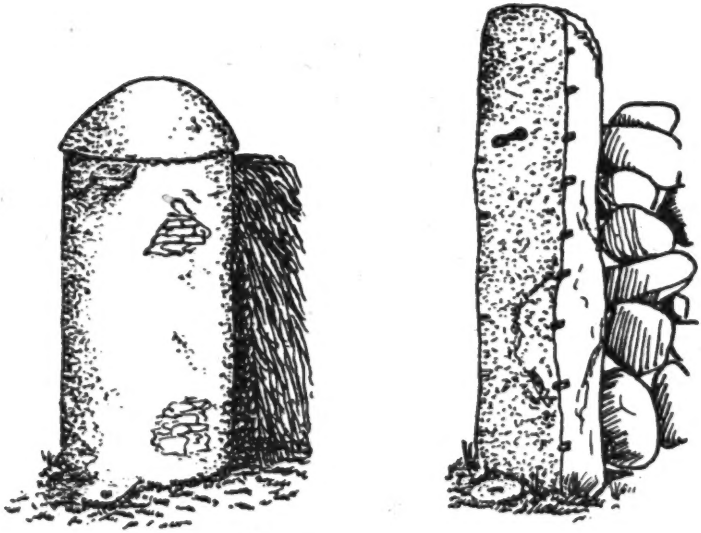


FIG. 88. Gateposts, Co. Down. *Left:* built-up pier with stone hinge and spud-stone. *Right:* granite slab with iron hinge and spud-stone.

[342] The shortage of suitable timber also led to the disappearance of the native wattled house and of the introduced timber-framed house, and the fact that such houses were more combustible (and that wooden gates, as one observer remarked, would have been stolen for firewood) was of less importance. The prototype of the stone piers of the farmyard may perhaps be seen in the great entrance pillars of the fortified 'bawns' erected by the seventeenth-century planters. Yet the style is quaintly archaic, and they have often been compared to miniature round towers. Very stout examples do indeed resemble the stone beehive 'clochauns' which we describe later, except that they are solid. In their construction the method of marking out the circumference and maintaining a vertical line by means of a string attached to a central post which is later removed is primitive enough. Moreover the method of hanging the gate is archaic. It is the harr-hanging which is found also in Scotland, the Lake District, Cornwall and Brittany and has survived in these stony

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

refuge corners of Europe. The gate swings like a fire-crane, not on hinges or rings-and-hooks, but directly on its heel, on a projecting iron spud which swivels in a stone socket. These stone sockets or spud-stones are frequently seen around old farm sites, and very similar stones in Mesopotamia go back into the fifth millennium B.C. In the days before the iron gate was introduced wooden gates were hung in the same way, and we know from Scotland that they were sometimes tipped with stone.[1] A projecting stone perforated to hold the top of the gate-post (Fig. 33) has now been replaced, as a rule, by an iron eye.

In Co. Armagh I have heard the farm gate-piers referred to as the man and wife of the house, and one of the pair may have a flat top whereon, it is said, the fairies like to dance. The old people used to place the two first plates of champ—the Hallowe'en festival dish of mashed potatoes—on the top of the pier.[2] While all this may be nothing more than an exuberant play of fancy we cannot overlook the megalithic practice of selecting alternating pointed and flat-topped monoliths for some of their ritual erections, symbolizing, it is thought, male and female. The twin portal stones of many megalithic chamber graves come to mind, and pairs of such stones now standing in isolation, as at Lisdivin in Co. Tyrone,[3] may well have been a symbolic entrance to some vanished ceremonial enclosure. The tradition of large entrance piers dies hard. Not infrequently today the first thought of an improving farmer is to erect imposing concrete pillars at the entrance to his property. They are as a rule garishly painted and pebble-dashed, a poor substitute for their simple whitewashed forerunners.

In the early nineteenth century field gates were almost unknown except near towns, and we read of the rustic forerunner of the iniquitous barbed wire—a hay-rope strung with thorns.[4] In boggy areas one commonly sees the gnarled root stumps of bog trees doing service as a gate, much as the Canadian pioneer will make a temporary fence with grubbed-up stumps. The huge

[1] A. Mitchell, *The Past in the Present* (1880), 127.
[2] Michael Murphy, *At Slieve Gullion's Foot* (1940), 64.
[3] O. Davies, *U.J.A.*, 2 (1939), 169.
[4] G. V. Sampson, *Memoir*, 288.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

351 417 defensive horns of the long-extinct Irish elk, dug from the bogs, have been utilized for this purpose! That the gate-piers are more significant than the gate is evident when one sees a bundle of thorns or a collection of decaying farm implements doing service as a stop-gap between a pair of magnificent pillars. Where stones of suitable dimensions are available, in granite or limestone country, for example, single uprights take the place of the built-up piers (Fig. 33). In the Aran Islands the field-walls, a single stone in width, have no permanent openings, but phantom gates—a portion of wall which is knocked down and rebuilt as required—are defined by upright slabs (Fig. 34).

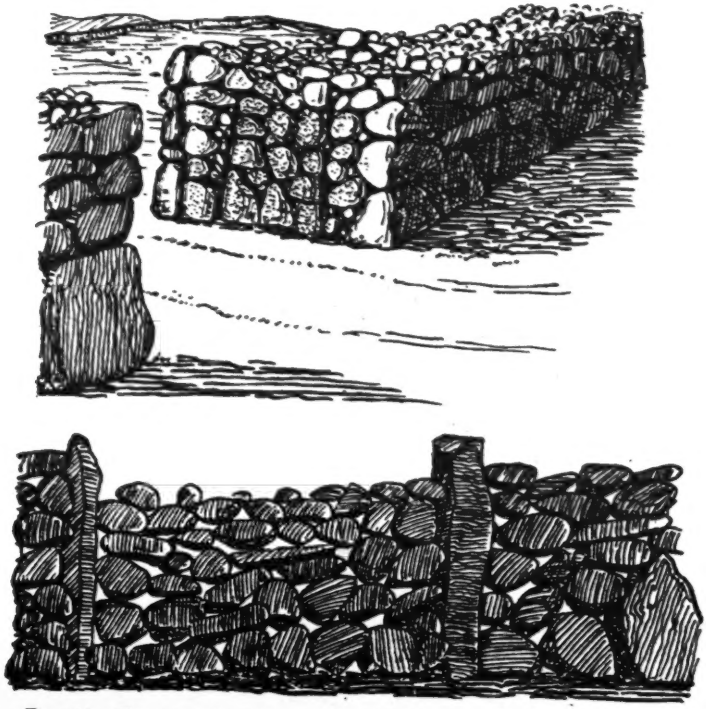


FIG. 34. *Above:* a 9-ft. wide wall in the Mourne Mountains. 'Monumental relics of secular toil, such walls may record by their successive accretions periods of agricultural activity through the ages.' *Below:* stone gateway, Aran Islands.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

FARMYARDS AND FENCES

This was formerly the custom also in Connemara and Co. Clare, and it finds an explanation not so much in the scarcity of wood or iron for gates as in the desirability of giving the wind no way into the fields. Such stone walls, seemingly artless constructions of rough boulders, are characteristic of the thin-soiled hillsides throughout Ireland. Most of them are of no great age, for permanent enclosure on this scale is comparatively recent, yet dry-stone walls were built by the men of the megaliths, and there was a lingering tradition of wall-building among the stony hills, which blossomed with intricate garlands of dry-stone walls when enclosure came. What distinguishes these boulder walls is their flimsy lace-like appearance when seen against the sky. Herein lies their strength, for they are full of holes and offer less resistance to the wind than a solid wall. They are most characteristic of hillsides where stony moraines and drift-boulders occur: other types of stone call for different treatment, and taking into account those fences which are partly or entirely made of sods or earth there is an endless variety in the tens of thousands of miles of ditches which mark out this now much-enclosed land.

To speak of a ditch without defining the Irish meaning of the word is to mislead the English reader. It is used in the sense of dyke, a raised bank, and it is not difficult to see why, since the positive and negative earth-ditch usually accompany each other, the word should change meaning. The older meaning of 'ditch' in the north of England was a bank. Similarly in Normandy the word 'fosse' is applied to a raised bank dividing the fields. An Ulster M.P. is said to have caused much amusement at Westminster in a debate on fox-hunting when describing how Irish horses jumped a ditch by changing feet on top! In the north of Ireland as in Scotland the open drain alongside the ditch is known as the sheugh.

We know from archaeological evidence that many existing types of ditch are of prehistoric antiquity. The dry-stone walls of the circular enclosures known as cashels and the earthen ditches of the countless raths of the Dark Ages were, by and large, little more than farmyard fences. Scores of existing farmsteads occupy the old sites and even when, as is more usual, the farms are on sites of fairly recent choice the ditch surrounding

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

the farmyard tends to be a substantial construction. Where the farm is a survivor of a clachan, the small fields near the house, little more than gardens in size, are surrounded by massive winding walls attractive to the eye and always worth examining. Over rough ground they pick their way erratically, incorporating great boulders which could not be moved and which, centuries ago perhaps, became the nuclei of smaller boulders cleared from the fields. Knotted tangles of walls ten or twelve feet thick have resulted, monumental relics of secular toil. Such walls may record by their successive accretions periods of agricultural activity through the ages (Fig. 34). When more stones are removed from the fields they are added as an outer skin, and one can easily recognize the latest additions by the bleached unlichened nakedness of the stones. Archaeological material may be accidentally incorporated in the core of the wall. The wall-builders, too, apparently had a habit of thrusting into the crevices curiosities picked up when working in the fields or bits of abandoned tools, and I have occasionally found prehistoric polished stone axes which their finders had pushed into a wall. The core of the wall is likely to contain similar oddments and bits of pottery, so that the excavation of old walls can be quite profitable to the archaeologist. In Denmark it has been possible to date ancient field-walls to various periods stretching back into prehistory, mainly by means of the stray objects they contain.

In Ireland the clearest evidence for the antiquity of some field boundaries comes from the remains found buried under the bogs. Examples in Co. Londonderry have been described by Dr. Oliver Davies as consisting of irregularly piled stone slabs with standing stones set at intervals.[1] Some of these ancient walls, which country people in Ulster call Danish fences, seem to have enclosed large areas and appear from their contour-alignment to have been head-dykes, enclosing land once arable, but now overgrown with peat, and demarcating it from the rough outfield. I have seen examples both in Ulster and in Munster which are of massive dry-stone work tied to great standing stones set at fairly regular intervals. Often it is only the standing stones, deep-bedded by the builders, that remain to puzzle the archaeologist. A characteristic of these fences is that

[1] O. Davies, *U.J.A.*, 2 (1939), 61–65.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

many of the stones are set vertically or diagonally.[1] Others of the same character, or equally massive earthen banks, may be observed to radiate from some of the raths or 'Danish forts' which we now know to have been farmsteads of the Dark Ages and, since they seem to have been single farms held in severalty, the enclosures which they presuppose are likely to be co-eval with the raths. Indeed Professor O'Riordain has claimed that the existing earthen field fences around the group of raths at Cush in Co. Limerick closely follow those of the late Bronze Age which were 'essentially similar' . . . 'the present-day field system is the direct descendant of the ancient one'.[2]

Much smaller and more irregular are the walls one sees associated with areas of megalithic settlement, though this may be because of their great age. Indeed one example recently discovered during the excavation of a megalithic tomb in Co. Down, which was older than the construction of the cairn and partly preserved by it, was built in coursed dry-stone work.[3] We have as yet little information to draw on but it seems likely that these oldest walls were mainly the result of the casual piling-up of stones cleared from little patches of cultivated ground. Some of the great walls associated with clachans and referred to above may well be built on the foundations of such lines of stones pitched around and between bedded boulders which could not be moved. Yet the size of some of the stones built into these ancient walls is astonishing. I have watched a loose-limbed farmer, who seemed to inherit the physical characters as well as the skills of the megalith builders, handle with superb ease great boulders which one would think it beyond human power to move. A stout timber or iron bar and a sturdy slipe (Chapter XIII) are the tools used. Alternatively boulders may be buried *in situ* if there is sufficient depth of soil, but until recently there was a reluctance, for superstitious reasons, to break up large stones. I have not come across the old miners' practice of cracking stones with fire,[4] and except near towns or quarries the splitting of field stones by means of wedges, 'plug

[1] O. Davies, loc. cit., 62.
[2] S. P. O'Riordain, *P.R.I.A.*, 45 (1940), 83–181.
[3] A. E. P. Collins and D. M. Waterman, *Millin Bay, a late Neolithic Cairn in Co. Down*, H.M.S.O. (1955), 8.
[4] But A. Young (*Tour*, 2, 115) describes the process near Killarney in 1778.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

351 and feathers', or explosives is a comparatively recent develop-
417 ment. These methods took a heavy toll of the megalithic
[316] monuments of granite-quarrying districts such as the Mourne Mountains in the nineteenth century, though superstitious tales are still told of the misfortunes which befell the stone-workers.

Another type of stone ditch popular in the limestone plain of east Galway is curiously similar to the Scots Galloway dyke and may well have been introduced by improving landlords or their agents. The lower portion of the ditch is a dry wall of small stones about two feet high carefully levelled on top, and on this rests a wall of boulders of lace-work type two or three feet high. The heavy superstructure not only secures the lower part with its weight but, perhaps because of its slight overhang and tottering appearance, is said to deter cattle and sheep from approaching the wall (Fig. 35). The low walls of loosely piled

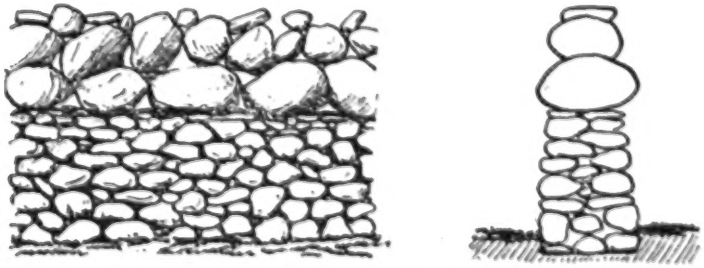


FIG. 35. East Galway ditch of Galloway type, and cross-section.

stones on Rathlin Island are said to act as a deterrent on the principle of the modern electric fence: I was told that animals give them a wide berth once having learnt that they collapse almost at a touch. At the other extreme are the ten-foot walls which run for miles around many demesnes, isolating them physically from the surrounding country so that only at the entrances or the now numerous gaps does one get a glimpse of the decayed grandeur inside. A good many of them are 'famine
[731] walls' built to relieve distress during famine years, in return for a meagre allowance of food and a wage of perhaps a few pence per day.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

FARMYARDS AND FENCES

Throughout the lowland farming country the commonest ditch is an earthen bank faced on one side with stones and planted with quicks slipped in near the base among the stones (Fig. 36). This was the 'approved mode' of enclosing the land

FIG. 36. The hedged ditch, cross-section.

advocated by the reformers from the late eighteenth century onwards, but it was noted that 'the planting of hedgerows was repugnant to the practice of the country' and in many districts the hedges were neglected and the livestock still had to be tethered in the fields.[1] The tradition of temporary fences died hard. 'A year's ditch passeth for a very strong fence', wrote Sir John Davies to the Earl of Salisbury in 1606. These sod fences were deliberately thrown down after harvest, and the decayed sods enriched the soil. The *Advertisements for Ireland* published in 1623 state: 'Their fields lie open and unclosed. Where wood is plentiful they hedge in all their corn with stakes and bushes and pull them down in the winter and burn them.'[2] When fixed field-divisions were adopted, the hedgeless earthen bank was preferred in many parts of the country, usually growing a luxuriant crop of brambles and gorse (whins). These were a useful source of firewood and provided both shelter and food for the livestock, the 'pounded whins' being fed to horses. The knocking stones, flat slabs or stone basins where the whins

[1] *Report on the Estates of the Drapers' Company in Ireland*, 1829.
[2] *Advertisements for Ireland* (1623), Ed. G. O'Brien (1923), 33.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

were 'melled' with a wooden maul, are sometimes to be seen in the farmyard, and there were a few water-driven 'whin-mills'. Their use is almost forgotten as is the custom of growing a field of whins to provide fodder. This was done in Co. Cavan and it is a recognized method of land utilization in the poorer parts of Brittany. A gorse hedge near the homestead is still popular as a place for drying clothes on washing day. 'Firing being scarce', wrote Gabriel Beranger of the barony of Bargy and Forth, 'they plant all their ditches with furze, which serves them for firing, and is reckoned equal in value with the produce of the land.'[1] Small farmers in Co. Down preferred wide earthen ditches because, as Binns was told: 'we have both sides of the ditch for feeding the cattle, and whins to bruise for the horses'.[2] The economy of the grass-grown ditch becomes clearer when we realize that on boulder-strewn hillsides where wide stone ditches separate the tiny fields a high proportion of the land is sterilized. Such wide earth banks often serve as footpaths where the land is wet, and in Co. Limerick I have seen cart tracks on top of them. This habit may go back to the wide balks between some of the openfield patches, which were used as access ways where the boggy fields were too soft to take a cart. Such double ditches, when faced with stones on both sides, are undoubtedly an old type of fence, for they are characteristic of many raths or Dark Age farmsteads. These 'dry fences' are common in Co. Kerry and also in north Antrim, and they occur in Brittany, and in parts of Anglesey and north Pembrokeshire. In stony country the filling of a double ditch may be of loose stones gathered from the fields, and here again we have ancient examples in the enclosing walls of small cashels which are the equivalent in thin-soiled areas of the raths of the lowlands.

What nearly all these many types of field fences have in common is their untidy appearance. Dry stone walls tend to be cyclopean, lacking the precision of those of north England or the Cotswold country. Rough glacial boulders are a poor substitute for oolite, and one recalls the comment of Sir John Russell that Irish architecture suffered because of the virtual absence of Jurassic rocks in the geological series. Rarely does

[1] Lady Wilde, 'Memoir of Gabriel Beranger', *J.R.S.A.I.* (1876), 132.
[2] J. Binns, *Miseries and Beauties*, 1, 60.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

native to the country. Around the coasts the sycamore is almost the only tree that persists, for it will stand up to the salt-laden gales everywhere save on the most exposed parts of the west coast. R. U. Sayce has recorded the belief, from Montgomeryshire, that 'sycamore trees keep the fairies away and stop them spoiling the milk',[1] but this bit of lore cannot be of any great antiquity since the tree did not reach Britain from its home in the mountain belt of southern Europe until the sixteenth century. It presumably arose from the association of the tree with the farmyard. In Ireland the sycamore probably came in with the early seventeenth century planters, though the beech may be a medieval or even older introduction. Both trees had many economic uses, especially for dry-coopering, that is the manufacture of provision casks and butter firkins, and the sycamore is an excellent wood for turnery. Later, as the linen industry became mechanized, the beetling mills demanded sycamore for the great beam of the engine and beech for the vertical beetles.

The lay-out of farm buildings seems to have been, in the native single-farms, as haphazard and formless as was that of the houses themselves in an old clachan. As separate farms with outbuildings ('offices') became fashionable improvements after the middle of the eighteenth century, the latter were built for convenience of access and they were put close to the farmhouse, either attached to one end or lying parallel to provide a windbreak. Only in the planted areas does one find old examples of planned 'courtyard farms' where the house and offices enclose a square or rectangular yard. I fancy the stone or wooden 'hovel-stands' with their picturesque mushroom-like staddle-stones are also confined to planted districts. In the west a favourite method of making stacks is to build them about a central pole. (See p. 164.)

The wayside style is another absentee in the native Irish countryside, as is the footpath which is its companion. Short-cuts are rarely worth while in a land of tiny fields, and if there is a right of way there is sure to be a tolerable road. In fact there are so many farm lanes and access ways to mountain, seashore or bog that an economist might regard the amount of land so taken out of cultivation as excessive. It has been

[1] R. U. Sayce, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 45 (1938).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Antrim

PLATE 8

492
493
342
291
285

1. Slide-car with peat-kish. Glens of Antrim.

492
493
417

2. Wheel-car, Glens of Antrim.

[Facing p. 113]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Fermanagh
County Antrim

PLATE 9

314
516
493
291
412

1. Cutting turf (underfooting) in a Co. Fermanagh bog.

314
417
493
291

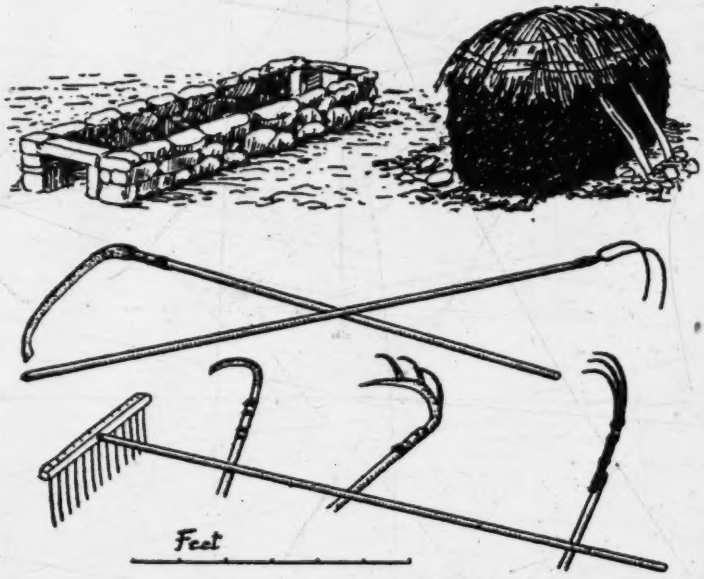
2. Building a peat stack, Co. Antrim.

[FACING p.144]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

222 cut at low tide. The weeds were dried on low stone walls and ricked and thatched until ready for the kiln on summer days. Rain rots the weeds, so that in wet weather the heavy kelp had to be shaken and turned repeatedly until it could be safely ricked. The half obliterated ruins of drying-walls and kilns made of sea-boulders can be seen on stormy beaches all around the coast (Fig. 73). In the early decades of the century the

[417]



[413]

FIG. 73. Kelp harvest. Kelp kiln and stack. Co. Galway. Hooks, knives and drags, west and south coasts (See Pl. 11).

dense oily smoke from the kilns drifting far inland was a familiar sight, each kiln burning for many hours and consuming several tons of weed, which was fed in a little at a time. It is said that 60 tons of weed are required to provide 1 ton of kelp, and the work was both arduous and filthy. If the supply of drift-weed failed the heavy tangles were laboriously dragged ashore or cut with knives mounted on handles up to twenty feet long to reach the best weeds, free of sand, growing in deep water. A

[413]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

539 796 origin, and the church honors St. Martin of Tours in the liturgy of November 11th. O Suilleabhain suggests that the Catholic feast has been reinterpreted with [178] a pagan festival, which had the sacrificial shedding of blood as one of its main [182] facets. St. Martin also is associated with the grinding of corn and with miraculous [252] powers for causing growth in plants and creating animals from inanimate matter. 796 In Inis Beag, the saint is regarded as a miller who was martyred in Ireland during 776 the Middle Ages by being cast under a mill wheel and ground to death. A few 798 islanders still observe the taboos of not turning wheels or spinning on the vigil and feast day to honor his martyrdom. The Sunday before St. Martin's Day is 796 called "bloody Sunday," when those who can afford to do so butcher a sheep to be 776 consumed by the family on the feast day; others less fortunate kill a fowl or duck 782 during the vigil. Using the sacrificed animal's blood, the father or mother makes [234] the sign of the cross on the forehead of each member of the family, while praying [825] that the saint guard the safety of all in the year to follow. Some folk use the blood [237] to bless in a like manner the fireplace, bedposts, front door, and outbuildings; all crosses, including those on the forehead, are allowed to remain until obliterated by natural causes.

796 Just as the girls of Inis Beag carry the Brigid's Doll and beg from door to 825 door on the feast day of the saint, the boys do the same with a wren attached to • 417 a long wooden pole on the morning of St. Stephen's Day, the feast day following 53 Christmas. The "wrenboys" travel in pairs and are invited into each home, where they are awarded coins for dancing and singing this song:

> Wren, wren, the king of the birds,
> St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.
> So little I am, my family is great.
> Get up landlady and give us a break.
>
> Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
> And give us a shilling to carry the wren.
> If you haven't a shilling a ha'penny will do.
> If you haven't a ha'penny—God bless you.

Handkerchiefs, ribbons, and a sprig of holly also are attached to the pole, and in 1959 only one pair of youths managed to "hunt the wren" successfully and thus maintain the tradition. A home is not blessed by these visitations, as in the case of the groups of girls on St. Brigid's Day, but the act of giving money is believed [184] to bring luck to the household. In some regions of the mainland, wrenboys wear straw masks, animal skins, or horns, and carry the wren on a holly bush or decorated wooden tray as they march in procession shouting and singing songs to the accompaniment of homemade skin tambourines (Evans 1957:279). Little is known of the pagan roots of the ceremony.

771 In addition to the reinterpretations associated with the holy well and with 776 Celtic festivals, there are many others of lesser significance of which only three will be considered here: beliefs concerning ghosts, the evil eye, and the afterworld. 771 We have seen that most of the folk have had contact of some sort with the fairies; 775 they also have witnessed ghosts—called "shades"—in corporeal form in Inis Beag or sailing the surrounding waters. These beings, who "aren't of this world," some-

JOHN C. MESSENGER

which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which compose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies, passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes, which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can discover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

[2] The culture described herein is that of 1959–1960 and excludes important changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the introduction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.